

Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission
APPROVED Minutes of September 16, 2013
Quarterly Meeting



Commissioners & Designees:

Cola, Jeanne – Chair

Brophy, Michelle; Representing Craig Stenning
Corrigan, Gayle; Representing James DeRentis
Flynn, Kevin; Representing Richard Licht
Freese, Carleton
Hannifan, Chris
Imondi, Deborah A.
Kravatz, Mark
McGunagle, Joanne
Novais, Ana; Representing Dr. Fine

Raymond, Joseph
Reed, Jim
Reiner, Jon
Ryczek, Jim
Schultz, Gregory; Representing Peter Kilmartin
Sekeres, Bonnie
Valliere, Albert
Zaslow, Carrie

Staff:

Dennehy, Peter
Kue, Simon
Neirinckx, Ray
Price, Darlene

Sullivan, Laura
Tondra, Michael
Vittorioso, Dawn

Guests:

Archambault, Laura
Coleman, Paula

Gessow, Eugene
Hernandez, Carol

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Jeanne Cola, Chair at 12:31 p.m. Jeanne took a moment to thank everyone for accommodating the meeting time.

2. **Welcome and New Member Introductions**

Mike began by explaining that he has worked with the Governor's office to re-appoint and appoint several new members to the commission over the past year. He announced that Carrie Zaslow, Joanne McGunagle and Chris Hannifan were recently reappointed to the Commission. He then introduced the newest Commissioners; Joseph Garlick, who represents the Non-Profit Development Corporations, Carleton Freese, who represents the homeless community, Mark Kravitz, who represents lead paint for healthy housing issues and Jonathan Reiner, who represents local planning initiatives for the Town of North Kingstown. Mike then pointed out the Commissioner vacancies that are available in the racial minorities, fair housing, insurers and senior housing categories. He said that if anyone would like to recommend someone within those categories, they should contact him directly with suggestions.

Next, Mike requested the designees who serve on behalf of a formal representative provide a current letter from the official representative naming them and giving them the authority to participate in the HRC and vote on their behalf.

3. **Approval of March 22, 2013 Meeting Minutes – for vote**

Jeanne asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 22, 2013. Joanne McGunagle moved to approve the minutes of March 22, 2013 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Joseph Raymond. The motion passed unanimously.

Joseph Raymond took a moment after the vote to discuss the lead topic. Joseph wanted to ensure that everyone was aware of the changes made since the last meeting. He noted that the State adopted a new building code, which in essence follows the same format; however, language was removed from the previous version. Mike thanked Joseph for his comments and said that his office will be working with the Childhood Lead Action Project Program (CLAP) and HRC Commissioners prior to presenting any written guidance to the building commissioners.

4. **Report of the HRC Chair/Director**

Jeanne introduced Mike Tondra who then discussed the following items:

Staffing – Pheamo Witcher will begin employment on September 23rd. She will be responsible for certain functions of both the homeless and community development programs.

Budget Working Group – Mike noted that the last meeting was not well attendance and therefore asked the Commissioners if they would like to continue with the budget discussions using this ad-hoc working group format. It was decided that the Budget Working Group will re-convene and Mike will send out a meeting request for the near future.

Jeanne asked if anyone had any questions or comments for Mike. There being none, she thanked Mike and introduced the next item on the agenda.

5. Affordable Housing Bond Regulations – for vote – Resolution #1

Jeanne asked Mike to provide an overview. Mike explained that the Secretary of State's (SOS) office is requesting the HRC to reapprove and authorize the affordable housing bond regulations be filed with the SOS's office. This will be the final step to promulgate the regulations with the SOS's office. Mike noted that the regulations that were included in the Commissioner's packet have not been amended since the previous approval.

Next, Mike read the resolution... The HRC hereby approves the final Affordable Housing Bond regulations and authorizes the HRC Executive Director to promulgate these regulations with the Secretary of State's office as necessary.

Jeanne asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There being none, she asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Carrie Zaslow moved to approve. The motion was seconded by Joanne McGunagle. The motion passed unanimously and there was no further discussion.

As there were no further comments or questions, Jeanne introduced the next item on the agenda.

6. Continuum of Care – vote - Resolution #2

Next, Jeanne asked Mike to provide an overview. Mike explained that HUD's homeless assistance application is strict and requires applicants to establish a continuum of care in accordance with federal regulations under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. Previously the HRC itself has essentially served at the State's Continuum of Care (COC) but new membership requirements which conflict with statutory membership requirements of the HRC prevent that from occurring moving forward. The ad-hoc COC Governance Committee was established to review these regulations and develop some initial general operating procedures for RI's statewide COC. The information distributed outlines that structure and the initial membership. Generally, it is recommended that the COC be an expanded HRC with the HRC officially adjourning its regular meeting and immediately reconvening as the COC, with additional members. HUD requires State approval of this structure prior to submittal of application materials so it is being brought to the HRC today for consideration.

Next, Mike read the resolution "The HRC hereby approves the Continuum of Care procedures, structure and membership, including Continuum of Care Board, as outlined in Commissioner's meeting packet."

Jeanne asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There being none, Jeanne asked for a motion for the HRC to approve the Continuum of Care procedures, structure and membership, including Continuum of Care Board. Jim Ryczek motioned to approve. The motion was seconded by Joanne McGunagle. The motion passed unanimously and there was no further discussion.

7. State Rental Subsidy Initiative – for vote - Resolution #3

Jeanne asked Mike to provide an overview. Mike explained that in the last hours of the budget process, the HRC was allocated \$750,000 in funding to undertake a rental subsidy program. The HRC convened a meeting to discuss options for allocation of the funds and developed a distribution plan which was included in the Commissioner's packet. Mike noted that, if the HRC approves this plan, an expedited request for applications will be distributed. The objective is to have the funds disbursed in October so that they can help meet the needs for shelter during the winter months.

Carleton Freese referred to the disbursement section within item number four. He asked if this item was still pending review/approval from the Department Chief Financial Officer. In response, Mike said that he has not received a formal decision from the State's Fiscal Office. He then explained that landlords expect immediate payment for rental assistance; a disbursement plan would take this into consideration. Generally, the State will follow a process of offering working capital advances to administrative agencies with subsequent payments based upon actual documented disbursements. This would also avoid cash flow and continuity of program issues if funding for the program continues in the next fiscal cycle.

Gayle Corrigan noted that Rhode Island Housing's Policy Director, Amy Rainone, submitted feedback relating to the Homeless Assistance Program. Mike noted that Amy's comments were received after the original content was circulated for review and to avoid confusion, those comments have not yet been incorporated. Suggested changes were, however, recommended. With the Chairperson's approval, Gayle pointed out Amy's presence and asked if she could discuss the areas of concern.

Amy said that funding should be limited to individuals that are considered literally homeless under HUD's definition. Amy then discussed rental assistance timeframes and noted that the application should have clear and concise language that notates the specific time periods for the assistance provided. Next, she referred to Mike's previous comments as it relates to a working capital advance and stated that this would ease the transition in terms of the new budget year. Lastly, she noted that the program name in guidance should be referred to as Rhode Island Housing's Rhode Home rental assistance program as opposed to Road Home emergency (rental) assistance and/or shelter plus care programs. In response, Mike said that the comments that were submitted by Rhode Island Housing were supported by OHCD staff. Jim Ryczek noted that elimination of support for services could solve potential issues and maximize the number of persons served. He further explained how occupants of existing permanent supportive housing units, who no longer require intensive services, could benefit from this program. Lastly, Jim recommended flexibility in the administration of this program. Mike followed up by referencing the "indirect targeting" section of the Distribution Plan. This provision permits applicants to allocate assistance to occupants of permanent supportive housing who no longer require the service assistance (consistent with the move-on strategy of the Opening Doors plan), ultimately opening up a PSH unit for the chronically homeless population, who would be tracked as an additional beneficiary of this effort.

Bonnie Sekeres asked to consider a future project for elderly homeless individuals in the same situation. Jeanne Cola agreed and said that she would take note for future projects.

Jim Reed asked Mike if a report would be produced for the quarterly meetings on demographics for the number of people served. Mike agreed.

Gayle Corrigan said that the language should be clear on the eligible amount and uses for administrative. Jim Ryczek agreed. Gayle recommended no funds be allocated to administrative costs, unless they are essential. Jeanne asked if there were any objections. Jim Reed indicated that he supports the funding to

go to homeless individuals; however, there should be provisions in place for service providers to have some flexibility in working with agencies. Jeanne asked Jim Ryzcek what percentage he would recommend be set aside for administrative costs. Jim stated that in the past, 3% was used for consolidated homeless funding and said he thought that was a reasonable percentage. Gayle agreed and said that was a reasonable amount. Mike noted that he would revise the service and administrative section.

At this time, Jeanne asked for motion to approve resolution 3 as amended and asked Mike to read the revised resolution. Mike said that resolution 3 to be amended as:

The HRC hereby approves the State Rental Subsidy Initiative distribution plan as amended, to include the following:

- Striking "Emergency" from the Rhode Home Emergency Rental Assistance Program language.
- Include language with limits assistance to those currently homeless by HUD definition;
- Indicate the period of assistance as part of the application;
- Change the administrative/services language to permit no more than 3% for administrative purposes directly related to the effort. Service cost support would not be permitted.

Jim Reed moved to approve Resolution 3 as amended. The motion was seconded by Bonnie Sekeres. The motion passed unanimously.

8. HRC Budget FY14/FY15 – *For discussion*

Mike said that the budget working group would be re-established and explained that comments were received in prior years requesting that the larger group have an opportunity to discuss budget items. Mike then asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Michelle Brophy noted that she would like the Open Doors plan to be included in the budget request. Jeanne encouraged everyone to participate in the budget committee meetings and indicated that Mike would send everyone the details as it moves forward.

Michelle Brophy asked what the deadline is for submitting recommendations to the Governor's office. In response, Kevin Flynn said that the budget was formalized in January; therefore, submissions should be submitted prior to October.

There being no further questions or comments, Jeanne moved to the next agenda item.

9. Acknowledgements & Announcements

Jeanne thanked everyone again for their attendance and asked Mike if he had any additional items that he would like to discuss. Mike announced that a RFP was issued for the Affordable Housing Bond Resources. The applications are being reviewed; a total of 91 proposals were received. Once the staff has reviewed the proposals, they will be reviewed by the Bond Distribution Committee and then will be presented to the HRC for approval. Therefore, the next meeting, will include the approval of the first round of bond projects.

Jeanne pointed out the 2014 meeting schedule was distributed and asked everyone to mark their calendars. She then asked if anyone had any further announcements that they would like to share.

Michelle Brophy took a moment to acknowledge and thank the Coalition for the Homeless and the Housing Network for their hard work and advocacy.

10. Public Comment Period:

There were none.

11. Adjourn:

As there were no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.